

**League of Women Voters of Frederick County, MD**  
**Board Meeting Minutes, December 18, 2023**

**In attendance in person:** Annette Breiling, Jessica El-Zeftawy, Jim Filson, Jill Griffith, Lauri Gross, Margaret Hindman, Kate Jones, Sue Krause, Sue Kunkel.

**In attendance virtually:** Rosanne Roe, Ellen West, Rosemary Orthmann, Michael Bunitsky, Suzy Bailey, Frances Keeley, Mary Beth Coker.

**Call to Order:** 5pm Lauri Gross called the meeting to order.

**Minutes:** Jim Filson moved that the November 20, 2023 minutes be approved and Ellen West seconded. The minutes were accepted as submitted.

**Treasurer's Report:** Claire Kondig reported that the LWVFC now has a balance of \$7,839.23. Claire received \$300 in checks and \$180.93 in PayPal dues from members for a total of \$480.93 in membership dues. The Legislative Breakfast brought in \$126.65 when entrance fees and donations were combined. Lauri moved the Treasurer's Report be accepted and Jill Griffith seconded. The Treasurer's Report was accepted as submitted.

**Membership:** Kate Jones mentioned that she is updating the membership roster. The corrected roster needs to be sent to the state league. An email will be sent out to members who owe dues in order to finalize the membership list. Once finalized, the list will be sent to LWVMD for the Nation Builder database.

**Voter Services:** Jill mentioned that LWVFC only needs to translate into Spanish the sections of the Voters' Guide that apply to local candidates, such as the Board of Education. The U.S. league will cover the translation costs for the Presidential race and Montgomery County will cover the translation costs for the House and Senate races, since Montgomery and Frederick Counties share some of the same candidates. Jill recommends contacting the *Frederick News Post (FNP)* about printing the Spanish translation of the Voters' Guide, since distribution may double with the inclusion of the translation for all the races. If the league is unable to get the Spanish translation of the local Voters' Guide printed, as long as the translation appears on the league's web site and is advertised in Spanish language newspapers, that may be sufficient. Jill and Ellen are working on the Frederick City grant application to fund the Spanish translation of the Voters' Guide. The City grant application requires the purchase of voter registration data from the state Board of Elections. City voter registration data is also required on the application, but it's unclear how the league can obtain that data. The data will cost roughly \$300. Ellen is also working with the Spanish Community Foundation of Maryland and Centro Hispano de Frederick to cover the costs of the Spanish translation. In addition, Ellen and Jill will seek an Ausherman grant to fund the translation. Jill asked whether LWVFC will provide a Voters' Guide and Spanish translation for the City elections in 2025, because that might require funding too.

Lauri mentioned that Vote411 and Voters' Guide training is coming up in January. LWVMD Barbara Crain will provide the Voters' Guide training. The following LWVFC people signed up to help with the Voters' Guide: Lauri Gross, Patti Connor, Sue Kunkel, Ellen West, Rosemary Orthmann, Rosanne Roe, Jill Griffith, Esther Ziegler, and Sue Krause. So far, Jim Filson, Lauri Gross, and Nannette Hobson have volunteered to help with the Forums. Jim reported that for the Forums for the primaries and general elections, 10 people are running for a Senate seat and 13 people are running in District 6.

**LWVFC School Programs with County Board of Elections:** Mike Bunitsky reported on his work with the Board of Elections to bring civics education to Frederick County schools. The Board has a specialist who coordinates civics education in the high schools, a separate group that provides information for Channel 18, and yet another group that sends flyers through the school system. Mike has made progress in obtaining permission to allow high school juniors and seniors to become election judges either for pay or student service learning hours. Training for these students will be held in January. The Board of Elections plans to send flyers to teachers, and get information on Channel 18 about this training. The league can use the Board's flyer verbiage to issue its own press release. The league can then contact the *FNP* to try to get press coverage and get a notice on the *FNP* calendar about the training. Because of several restrictions, Mike has more work to do to provide students information in person in classrooms. However, teacher training on elections will be conducted, which they can then provide students before the general election. The good news is that all high school seniors must pass a civics exam to graduate and Maryland's pass rate is high. The league can also help students get registered to vote. The league has a high school

student member and she is permitted to speak about elections with other students, speak in classrooms (with the principal's permission), and hand out flyers. In addition, if students are given a QR code on a flyer, they can easily access election information.

**Publicity:** This last month the LWVFC obtained excellent editorial coverage from its press releases. The *FNP* published stories on the Legislative Breakfast and Ranked-Choice Voting Program, the latter of which was a front-page story. The newspaper also included the Legislative breakfast in its calendar of events.

**Website:** Kate Jones mentioned that Sue Kunkel is Kate's new helper for the website. This last month Kate was able to post information about the Legislative Breakfast and Ranked-Choice Voting Program on the website. In addition, members can now listen to these types of programs on Facebook and YouTube by going to links on the website. The recording of the Ranked-Choice Voting Program had some technical glitches, but most of it was recorded correctly, so members can now access it through the website.

**Nominating Committee:** Margaret Hindman updated the league board on the status of the Nominating Committee's activities. Suggestions for nominations are due to Margaret on January 3. The first meeting of the Nominating Committee is on January 9, 2024 where the committee will finalize the slate of candidates. The election will take place at the league's annual meeting this coming spring 2024 and new officers and board members will begin their terms of office following that meeting.

**Legislative Breakfast:** Ellen West reported on the league's Legislative Breakfast at Grace United Church on December 2. Although not all representatives came, 25 people attended. The church charged a \$150 rental fee, which was reasonable, but Ellen would not recommend the facility in the future because of some of its limitations. For one thing, they ran short of coffee, had to make coffee by the pot, and had no tea. Ellen thanked members who brought food, after Kate posted the sign-up sheet on the website.

**Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV) Forum:** Margaret provided the board with a wrap-up of the November 29 Ranked-Choice Voting Forum. She commented that the publicity obtained by Rosemary Orthmann helped ensure excellent attendance. Approximately 60 people attended. Tech support for speakers with PowerPoints was also excellent. Margaret suggested that the league may want to propose the adoption of a statement in support of RCV at its 2024 Annual Meeting. This would allow the league to advocate for RCV at the state level and with the state league. Apparently the LWV of Montgomery County has taken this action in support of RCV and can be contacted for more information on RCV.

**Petition to the Board:** Annette Breiling submitted a petition to the board to consider supporting the "Prevent Nuclear War Maryland" Program, which has been endorsed by such entities as Frederick City and Baltimore. The United Nations has proposed a treaty called "Moving Back from the Brink" for prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons. Fifteen nations have ratified this treaty, but no nation that already has nuclear weapons, including the U.S., has. The treaty proposes reducing the size of nuclear arsenals, prohibiting the first use of nuclear weapons, ending the U.S. President's sole authority to determine the use of U.S. nuclear weapons, prohibiting the first-strike alert system, and prohibiting the modernization of nuclear weapons. Having the league endorse this campaign might bring more attention to the issue. Various state representatives have not supported this campaign so far, for example, David Trone and Karen Lewis Young. Karen believes that this is a federal rather than a state issue. However, Annette pointed out that there are states who have endorsed this treaty, including Rhode Island and Oregon. Ellen indicated that she agrees that this is a federal and state issue, not a county issue. She thinks that the state and national leagues should work together with the state legislatures and Congress on determining whether to endorse this treaty. Annette pointed out that both Montgomery and Prince Georges County leagues have endorsed this treaty. LWVFC should contact Nicki Tyree to receive clarification as to whether the LWVFC should pursue this issue.

**Ethics:** Jessica El-Zeftawy indicated she had nothing to report for the Ethics Committee. However, she did indicate that she will be stepping down from her work as the chair of this committee because she will be returning to school. She assured the board that she will help with the transition and training of the next Ethics Committee chair, since the process of choosing new commissioners for the Frederick County Ethics Commission begins in April. Mary Beth is on the Ethics Committee and can also help with that transition, as well as Margaret, who is on the board. Jess asked that someone on the Ethics Committee obtain the commission's timeline. Jessica indicated that she hopes LWVFC will continue its work on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. She would like to see DEI training, a book

club, and values statement on the first page of the web site and in the bylaws. Mary Beth Coker pointed out that the bylaws already contain a DEI statement in Article 2, Section 3. Jessica asked that the bylaw DEI statement be shared with all members and that the board outline steps being taken to achieve the DEI goals stated in the bylaws. She thinks it's important that the board use DEI principles to make intentional strategic decisions in member recruiting, public relations and press releases, photos on the web site, and events and programs. Lauri made the point that some progress has been made in this area, including covering the recent Hispanic Festival, reaching out to the Hispanic community regarding the Legislative Breakfast, and doing voter registration at Frederick Community College and Hood College which reached a diverse group of students. The league has also done some outreach to various area churches to increase membership and publicize its work. It was suggested that this item could be added to the agenda for the league's annual meeting in April. In addition, it was suggested that the centers for different cultures be listed on the web site and receive Voters' Guides.

**LWVNCA:** Upcoming is the annual luncheon for national and regional league presidents. Loudoun County is working with local NAACP chapters to hold candidate Forums, which is something that the LWVFC might consider for future Forums. Jim said that he would make a mental note of this item.

**Miscellaneous:** In January 2023, the Maryland Chapter of the National Organization for Women (Maryland NOW) established an Equal Rights Amendment Task Force, which has created a set of resources, free of charge, to inform Marylanders about (a) the status of the ERA and (b) actions they can take to help advance it as the 28th Amendment. Maryland NOW has resources available to LWVFC to partner in an educational outreach regarding the ERA. Members can contact Lauri for more information. Kate will post this item on the web site. On another note, Hood College implemented a new Core Curriculum requirement that will begin in the fall, requiring every student to complete a service learning project. Lauri noted that the league might be able to use students to help with Forums and the Voters' Guide as part of their service learning project, even though most of that work will be done in the spring in time for the primaries. The board should also reach out to its contact at Hood College who is working on students becoming Election Judges. Finally, the next national annual convention will be held in June in DC.

**Adjourned:** 6:15pm Lauri adjourned the meeting.

Minutes submitted by Rosanne Roe, Secretary.